1: Meek E, G-5 (1925-1930) 1931
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583 mere act of propagation until after the birth of the offspring, then these runaway unions are, generally speaking, genuine marriages. They are certainly so regarded by the natives; and the lover, after obtaining the woman's consent, has to secure the goodwill of her parents by making money payments (amounting nowadays to 15*s*. plus one goat) which have every [684] appearance of being a bride-price. To elope with a married woman without having made these payments is considered a serious offence.[1]

[851] Children begotten by the secondary husband belong to him. The original husband does not claim compensation for the loss of his wife, for he hopes that she will eventually return to him. A secondary husband, similarly, cannot claim the return of his payments if he in turn is abandoned. A Katab woman may thus in her lifetime have had as many as ten different husbands; but a woman so fickle would be regarded as being little better than a harlot among the more sophisticated tribes. Parents, [626] moreover, who consistently encourage a daughter to change her husband are viewed with contempt. Religious rites are even performed every three years, the object of which is to put a check on excess of elopement marriages.

The system of sub-marriages has been regarded with disfavour by both the Fulani and British administrations, and suggestions have been made and rules introduced for modifying or abrogating the practice, which is clearly a source of trouble to those in authority. We shall see presently, however, that the social organization of the Katab tribe is intimately bound up with the institution of sub-marriages. No regulations affecting the institution should, therefore, be introduced without a full understanding of their probable effect, nor should the opinion of the tribal chiefs themselves be accepted as final in the matter, for they may agree to changes the full effect of which they themselves are unable clearly to foresee.

587 Type (*c*). The third type of marriage is that produced by the inheritance or purchase of a widow. Sons may inherit and marry their father's or grandfather's widows (though marriages with the grandfather's widows are necessarily of rare occurrence)

[1] In the case of wives obtained *from neighbouring tribes* (capture or arrangement with the woman) the woman's parents were not consulted, though a bride-price might subsequently be paid.

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Associated apparently with the private ancestral cult is the public cult of the *obwai* or tutelary genius (Hausa *dodo*), how seems to represent generally the plurality of ancestral spirits and particularly the spirit of the ancestor of the clan or kindred. The people have no clear ideas on the subject, which is not surprising, as the *obwai* cult was found in many instances to have been an importation from neighbouring tribes or to have been derived from the Aku clan, whose *obwai* take precedence of all the others. It is noticeable that the *obwai* hut is the only round hut in the village. It can accommodate thirty or forty people, and is provided with mud benches. It is often surmounted with a piece of pottery resembling a crown. The doorway is protected by a curtain of palm fronds, and no initiate may enter the hut at any time other than on the occasion of a festival. The cult is in the hands of the *Agwam obwai*, and plays a considerable part in the social and religious life of the people. It partakes of the nature of a secret society and is used largely as a means of discipline for women and children. The *obwai* is not seen, but his voice is heard, and every two years his representative appears publicly in his costume of grass, dancing round and striking with his cane anyone he comes across. (It is said that he will strike a woman who is going to bear a male child, but will not touch a woman who is going to bear a female.)

As a social factor the *obwai* is not unimportant. If a theft is committed in the village the shrill voice of the *obwai* is heard, and he has to be provided with beer in order that the sin may be purged. The *obwai* may at night be heard striking the wall of a house where an ill-natured wife has been giving trouble to her husband, warning her to desist. I was informed by an *Agwam obwai* that the representations to him of a mere bully of a husband would not be received; he would be told he was a liar and sent about his business. Nevertheless, it is obvious that, as the cult is in the hands of men, and the *Agwam obwai* receives a benefit when his services are required, the cult must be used more in the interests of the male than of the female sex.

Among the neighbouring Kaje tribe every two to three years the *obwai* compels every woman to wear (from July until the *obwai* festival in February) a string necklace as a guarantee that she will not abandon her husband during that period, i.e. the Kaje seek by religious means to put some check on the social evil of excessive sub-marriages. She is required to wear this necklace

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794 626 582 continually, and to produce it at the spring festival tied round the pot containing her offering of beer. If she cannot produce it she is fined. If she runs off to another husband during that period, her relatives, who of course live in some other town, are fined. It might appear that the *obwai* of one town had no power of levying fines on members of another town, but as there is a reciprocal arrangement between the towns there is no difficulty in collecting the fines. The practice is not purely selfish, but is directed towards the common good, for in addition to prohibiting one's own wives from running away it also prohibits parents during this period from allowing their married daughters to contract a sub-marriage. A parent of town A who during these six months receives a bride-price from a man in town B for a married daughter who lives in town C is fined by the *obwai*.

794 796 241 The *obwai* is not, however, merely a village policeman. He is the centre of the festivals which begin and end the agricultural year. The main *obwai* festival is that which introduces farming operations just before the first rains. The whole community brings to the *obwai* hut offerings of beer, beniseed, goats, chickens, and porridge. The senior men pour the beer into the common pot in the *obwai* house, leaving a portion for the women and the younger people, who partake outside. The *Agwam obwai* then drinks a little of the beer from the pot, and asks the *obwai* to secure for them a successful farming season. A general feast ensues, the senior males being inside the *obwai* house, and the women and younger males being outside in the vicinity under a large tree. Dancing begins, and the voice of the *obwai* is heard. (He speaks, concealed in the roof, in a voice disguised by the use of a wooden tube covered with spider's egg capsule.) He breaks into a song, addressing, it would seem, his living representative the *Agwam obwai*: "Kiachang a chira" ("Have you taken aught from anyone by force?"). The *Agwam obwai* replies "E" ("No, I have not"). The *obwai* continues: "Gado ze yai kiang niâ cheda" ("No one can take aught by force—he can only give it willingly"). The *Agwam obwai* replies (singing, and all outside taking up the refrain): "Ei ee" ("Yes, that is true"). The *obwai* continues: "Lung yungwav" ("Fire has devoured the town"). Refrain: "Ei, ee." *Obwai*: "Salio bang ayawat" ("But nothing can part brethren save death only"). Refrain: "Ei, ee." *Obwai*: "A biang sang okwon" (indecent). Refrain:

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likely to embroil him with his fellow-clansmen. His position was never so strong that he could call on his clansmen to perform such personal services as the repair of his house or the clearing of his farm.

The position of the village-head was even more unenviable. It was his business to apportion the tax, which might be a horse or slave, or several, according to the size of the village. To obtain this he called on each householder to provide as much corn or cash as would suffice to buy the slave required. He had to arrest criminals and send them to Kauru. But apart from these imposed duties he was careful to mind his own business. Any excessive zeal would be rewarded by an arrow. The Katab was quick to seize his bow even against his nearest relatives, and it was not uncommon for a village-head to take refuge in Kauru until the anger of his fellow-villagers had subsided.

It would appear that in the early days the Aswen sub-clan was recognized as the senior Katab clan, the chief of Aswen receiving an acknowledgment of his position in the form of the forelegs of larger game killed. But in later times the sub-clan of Fakan assumed the rôle formerly held by Aswen. Fakan, however, was merely *primus inter pares*. If one sub-clan had a dispute with another the matter was referred to a disinterested group. Thus, if the Agbat had a dispute with the Aswen, the Fakan sub-clan was called in as an intermediary. If Fakan had a dispute with Nje, the Aswen clan was asked to adjudicate, and so on.

The present position is that the Katab (with the Ikulu and Kaje) are administered from Zaria by a resident district headman with the title of Katuka, who is directly responsible to the Emir of Zaria. The sub-clan and clan headman have no executive authority outside the limits of their own village-areas, but they combine to form a native court which sits monthly at each of the sub-clan headquarters, the chief of the sub-clan Aswen being at the moment president of the court. The sub-clan and elders also, in accordance with native custom, form a deliberative assembly, and I witnessed a meeting of this assembly which had been convened to discuss certain matters referred to them by the district headman. The Magajin Mugu of the Aswen sub-clan spoke first, and was followed in turn by the other sub-clan headmen. As each finished speaking the most senior men

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575 "Each candidate on election is given a gourd, but as it was foreseen that indiscriminate blowing would soon familiarise the women with the 'Dodo's' voice, no one is permitted to blow the gourd without the Magajin Dodo's consent.

"Each village has its 'Dodo' head-man, known as the Magajin Dodo. He is the supreme domestic authority and no woman, not even his wife, is allowed to enter what is designated as his 'Dodo' room. The office is hereditary, and as a rule descends from father to son. The Magajin Dodo always wears a goat-skin slung across his back. He is naturally an object of much awe to the women folk, who endeavour to propitiate him with frequent gifts of 'gia,' so that the venerable gentleman is often to be encountered in a hopelessly drunken condition. 593 It is to him that husbands appeal when their wives turn ● 626 refractory, and a visit from the dreaded 'Dodo' invariably 575 produces the desired effect. When the Magaji visits a disobedient wife, he is always accompanied by one of his four subordinates, called Magadda in Kagoma. The visit is prearranged and the husband plays the part of a willing accomplice in the ensuing farce.

"The approaching visit of the 'Dodo' is announced to the husband by a messenger sent on in front for that purpose. The husband professes to be very frightened and advises his wives to fly and hide in the *nearest* refuge. (This is so that they shall not be far away when wanted.) On the arrival of the 'Dodo' the erring wife is sent for. Should she refuse to come, the 'Dodo' approaches her hiding-place, and addresses his warning; the uncouth sounds made on the gourd being solemnly translated to her by the subordinate who acts as interpreter throughout. A warning is generally sufficient, but should the wife transgress again the 'Dodo' will order her to be beaten.

"To further impress these simple and credulous women with his powers, the Magajin Dodo will sit outside his house and carry on a conversation with the 'Dodo' who is inside. This is done, of course by hiding a man inside the house who makes the necessary sounds on the gourd."*

595 There is no limit to the number of wives that may be kept, 262 and the first takes precedence over the rest. They are not allowed to eat meat, or much salt, lest they should become fat and therefore unprolific.

846 On the day that a woman gives birth to a child both she 553 and it are bathed in cold water. Two days later the family-head, *i.e.*, the eldest male member of the family, names the child, [845] of whichever sex it be, except in the case of twins, who are named 852 two months after birth by the oldest man in the village. On

* Mr. H. F. Mathews.

426 the present occupier vacated or moved his house they could get the land back.

Authority in land matters.

81. The Katab tribe appears to consist of three exogamous clans—Nyam, Ku and Baht. The first named is divided into four kindreds, the second is not divided and the third into three kindreds. The correlation of social units with territorial units was inconclusive. It would need more time than was available to establish the relationship—if any. It would appear, however, that at the present time neither the kindred nor clan elders claim the right to settle disputes. A farmer aggrieved by his father's division of the lands, for example, would complain to the village (kindred) elders who would try to effect or compromise. If they failed the matter would be brought up to the tribal elders who alone would be competent to insist that their decision be accepted.

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82. The word insist has been deliberately used instead of enforce. The elders were at pains to point out that they would never require force to achieve their end. They would advise, then coax or persuade; if that failed then social pressure would be exerted—ridicule, ostracism and, though it was not mentioned, probably a reminder of the potency of the " tsafi "—the tribal drum. At any rate in the end the disputants would accept the decision. And they had never known it to fail (cf. paragraph 69).

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Unallocated lands.

83. As mentioned in paragraph 72 the Katab have little, if any, spare lands. All land in their area is claimed by some individual or family either as his or their farm or fallow—as with the Kagoro. It is not apparent that land hunger has set in—yet. Land can still be obtained freely on loan if one's own inherited lands are insufficient. Some families, reduced by death and disease, have more than they can use and are quite willing to loan it. Indeed, some of the elders complained that nowadays there were insufficient people to farm the lands properly since, if a man had four sons two would probably go off to the Mission and having gone away would no longer be interested in farming but would go off into some other non-agricultural pursuit. Whatever truth there may be in this statement the fact remains that some farmers find it impossible to follow the normal farm and fallow rotation and so adopt the "shifting compound " cultivation. The home farms are occupied with the house in the middle of them thus ensuring that their fertility is kept up by constant manuring; the " bush " farm is worked till its productivity becomes dangerously low. The whole household then moves *en bloc* to the " bush " farm which then becomes the " home " farm and is brought back into good fettle by manuring. The " home " farm has in the meantime become the " bush " farm—and so the process goes on. This

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